



Type 1365A in The Octopus

Author(s): Jan Harold Brunvand

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Notes and Queries

[The editors will welcome as contributions to this section of *Western Folklore* small items of traditional materials and inquiries designed to elicit information about such materials. In general, discussion of these materials will be brief. Records of facts likely to be lost or overlooked and inquiries which our readers may be able to answer will be the typical items.]

● *Further Notes on "A Man Must Live"*—Archer Taylor reported in *WF*, XXI, 2 (April, 1962), 112, several variants of the proverb "A man must live." I wish to provide some further samples. The sense of the proverb is sometimes put metaphorically in terms of animals, as when Pistol says: "Young ravens must have food." (Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I, iii, 38.) Again, E. B. White, in his classic children's book, *Charlotte's Web*, enlarges upon the theme through the voice of his heroine, Charlotte, a spider, speaking to her friend Wilbur, a pig. Charlotte is explaining that spiders eat arthropods: "Flies, bugs, grasshoppers, choice beetles, moths, butterflies, tasty cockroaches, gnats, midges, daddy longlegs, centipedes, mosquitoes, crickets—anything that is careless enough to get caught in my web. *I have to live, don't I? . . . A spider has to pick up a living somehow or other*, and I happen to be a trapper." (New York, 1952, p. 39. Italics supplied.) But Graham Greene uses a human to allude tersely to the idea in this passage: "She hasn't been here for a long time now. I haven't had any money, and *the kid's got to live*. God knows where she is now." (*The Shipwrecked*, New York, 1935, p. 11. Italics supplied.) Finally, I have encountered a form of the proverb in the oral tradition. A night watchman with whom I worked in 1941 at the Oakland, California, Chevrolet plant, named Ed Morley and aged then about sixty, often used to say: "It beats hell what a man will do for a living." Morley's remark is especially interesting in that it differs in its intention from the literary versions which Professor Taylor and I have found. The literary forms are all apologetic or defensive for some act or attitude which cannot be justified on moral grounds. Morley's saying seems to be a quizzically cynical commentary upon the shifts and compromises inherent to the human condition under our economic system.

LEW GIRDLER

San Jose State College

● *Type 1365A in The Octopus*—There is an apparent allusion to Tale Type 1365A *The Obstinate Wife Falls into a Stream* (T255.2) in Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901). According to Stith Thompson's *The Folktale* (p. 210)

and to *The Motif-Index*, this variety of the story has not been reported in the United States.

The allusion occurs in Chapter I of Book II when the wheat farmers' league has won a seeming victory over the railroad by seating its own man on the Railroad Commission. All of the farmers cheer the election, save only the stubborn, suspicious Annixter:

But he was jeered down as a croaker. There was the Commission. He couldn't get around that, could he? There was Darrell and Lyman Derrick, both pledged to the ranches. Good Lord, he was never satisfied. He'd be obstinate till the very last gun was fired. *Why, if he got drowned in a river he'd float upstream just to be contrary.* [My italics.]¹

Norris, of course, could have known the tale from his foreign travel or reading, but it is worth remembering that, like his character Presley in *The Octopus*, he hoped to compose a great "epic of the west" in which he could put "... the voice of an entire people ... their folk lore, their fightings, their loves and their lusts ..." and so forth.² Possibly he is recalling a western folk tale here.

JAN HAROLD BRUNVAND

University of Idaho

● *Number Six*—This medical or more correctly pharmaceutical term occurs often enough in American novels a century and more ago to be regarded as in common use and deserving of record. I note, for example, the following instances: 1839 Caroline Matilda Kirkland, *A New Home or Life in the Clearings*, ed. John Ferber (New York [1953]), p. 204, We stick to thoroughwort—balmony—soot tea—"number six," and the like. 1843 B. R. Hall, *The New Purchase* (2 vols., New York), II, 141, was physicked of them by steam logic, and doses of No. 6; p. 143, Why don't he and Campbell make steam and No. 6 as free as preaching?

Professor Alex Berman of the College of Pharmacy, The University of Texas, kindly elucidates these allusions for me. He quotes E. F. Cook and C. H. LaWall, eds., *Remington's Practice of Pharmacy* (7th ed., Philadelphia, 1926), pp. 386-387: "Number Six is a powerful gastric stimulant and carminative when used internally, having capsicum and myrrh as active agents." He adds the following comment: Originally it was made with "high wines, or fourth proof brandy, gum myrrh, and cayenne" for internal use. When used externally as a liniment, it was customary to add spirits of turpentine or gum camphor. As used by Thomsonian practitioners, it was administered inter-

¹ Frank Norris, *The Octopus*, Bantam Classic (paperback), SC 118 (New York, 1958), 194.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 5.